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Acculturation Disparity Analysis Model (ADAM): Experts and Apprentices

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Abstract

As apprentices begin the long journey that will ultimately prepare them to become the respected peers of their expert counterparts, the acculturation process can be detrimental to their success under steep learning curves and strict timelines. Many acculturation models exist, but there appears to be a gap in the underpinning foundational knowledge-base of the acculturation process, specifically between experts and their apprentices. A new and powerful theoretical framework named the Acculturation Disparity Analysis Model (ADAM) was generated from interview data and subsequently combined with two theoretical lenses. This model can serve as a mechanism to forecast acculturative outcomes between experts and apprentices and also as a restructuring tool for organizational policies to make the most of the acculturation experience. Though expanding theory, the ADAM should be recognized as a generalized model to stimulate further qualitative research in the robust and exciting field of acculturation approaches.

1. Introduction

Acculturation is the shift in cultural patterns which is caused by continuous interaction between groups of individuals rooted in different cultures [29] and is a major contributor to an individual's success or failure within an organization [2, 21]. Even though each person responds to acculturation differently [15], management can increase the chances of an employee's success if an acculturation method is agreed upon beforehand [26]. Expectation acculturation disparity, that is, opposing acculturation strategies between dominant and non-dominant groups, can lead to major internal organizational conflict and/or individual psychological stress [10]. The interaction between experts and apprentices breeds a unique acculturation relationship as novices typically strive to mimic the masters in their field [21], *magis et minus*. It seems intuitive that the acculturation process would be streamlined in an environment where

apprentices actively seek to emulate their experienced counterparts, but many psychological mechanisms such as intensity of contact, duration of contact and personality of individuals [29] factor into this amalgamation of unfamiliar traits which may hinder the acculturation process.

While cross-cultural team building is recommended to avoid misunderstandings in an increasing world of globalization [18], much of the onus remains with both the dominant and non-dominant groups as to an individual's successful acculturation [3]. It would be erroneous to assume that a dominant group acts and responds as a single culture, as it is also made up of individuals each with their own perspectives resulting in an integration of subcultures [20] or possibly even *nanocultures*. A more practical approach would be to consider an organization's culture as a roof under which many subcultures co-exist [25]. An organization's culture (which a foreign individual tries to become part of) is highly dynamic and ranges from "the social glue that holds the organization together" [2] to "the way we do things around here" [14] in the literature. Communal standards like these are expressed and displayed via specialized language and coordinated, harmonized beliefs [33] which are especially evident among groups of seasoned experts of a common field.

Schein defines culture as "the foundation of social order that we live in and of the rules we abide by", and goes on to say that organizational culture varies in strength as a function of the "length and emotional intensity of their actual history from the time they were founded" [32]. He also draws a correlation between culture and leadership which resonates throughout organizational culture, stating that leaders have the power to create, embed, evolve, and ultimately manipulate culture in an organization [32], even going as far as to say that "leadership and culture are two sides of the same coin".

Acculturation is typically considered a bidirectional phenomenon where changes occur within both groups, essentially gravitating towards a cultural center-of-mass [10]. In other words, acculturation rarely occurs in a single direction alone during cultural

intermingling. These bidirectional effects are dampened in expert-apprentice interactions, however, as professionals tend to remain rigid in their discipline's defining cultural philosophies. It is the cultural rigidity of this distinctive relationship which may render some acculturation approaches more attractive and effective than others. Globalization increasingly injects apprentices from diverse backgrounds in language, religion, culture, traditions, work ethic etc. into very demanding institutions with short timelines and steep learning curves. Such stringent conditions tend to decelerate the acculturation process when in fact acculturation acceleration is essential for maintaining competitive advantage [22]. Being able to recognize and reduce possible disparity in acculturation expectation could help eliminate acculturation decelerators for novices in their field of study.

Within the robust literature, there is the distinction of psychological acculturation which focuses on the acculturation of the psychology of an individual [19]. The relationship between the psychological outcome of an individual and the influence of cultural variables is of much value [3] in the search for a streamlined and efficient acculturation process, particularly where large investments and high probabilities of culture shock coexist. According to [4], there are four main acculturation strategies which emerge when participation with the dominant host and cultural maintenance of the non-dominant group are considered simultaneously. A 2 x 2 continuous matrix clearly captures the four acculturation strategies:

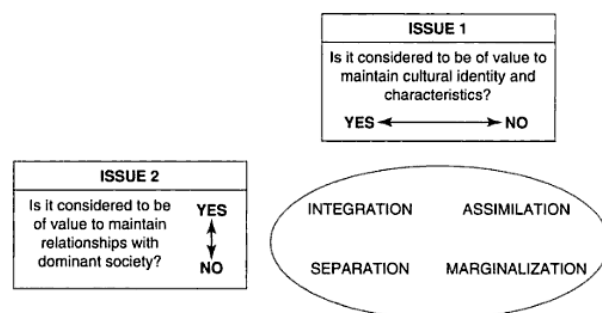


Figure 1 Acculturation strategies (adapted from [3])

Whether it's the merger of two Fortune 500 companies, the placement of an immigrant student into a US academic institution, or an apprentice gaining experience under his expert counterparts, acculturation plays a large role in the success of the partnership [26]. Evidence suggests that the dominant group cannot ignore the desires and preferences of the non-dominant

group throughout the acculturation process if respectable measures of attainment are desired [35].

This qualitative study of acculturation expectation disparity between experts and their apprentices will combine two powerful theoretical lenses: Force-Field analysis of acculturation [15] which applies quasi-stationary equilibrium to the acculturation process [23], and an Interactive Acculturation Model (IAM) which combines host community and immigrant acculturation orientations into a single conceptual framework [10]. Together these two models were combined with grounded theory to create a new and powerful theoretical framework called the Acculturation Disparity Analysis Model (ADAM) which can help understand the circumstances under which acculturation disparity may intensify among experts and their apprentices.

The results of this qualitative study may not be suitable for specific scenario application, as each one carries with it unique circumstances and social challenges. Future qualitative fieldwork is encouraged to illuminate the circumstances under which the ADAM and other acculturation theoretical models may be applied. This study attempted to answer the following research question, how is acculturation expectation disparity between apprentices and their expert counterparts best reduced?

This research effort is based in grounded theory [16] and included qualitative interviewing techniques of experts and their novice counterparts [30]. In-vivo, descriptive and pattern coding methodologies [31] were used to lift deeply rooted meaning from interview data. Nurturing an appreciation for acculturation expectation disparity between experts and their apprentices, this study seeks to fill a knowledge gap by generating innovative theory and conceiving a new echelon of acculturation awareness.

2. Background

The following sections will offer a thorough foundation for the basis of this qualitative study. It begins with an overview of acculturation to include prior research in the field. Comprehensive accounts of two theoretical frameworks will then be provided: a force-field analysis of acculturation [15] and the Interactive Acculturation Model [10], both of which were combined with grounded theory to form the Acculturation Disparity Analysis Model as a result of this study.

2.1. Acculturation overview

Many theoretical angles of acculturation emerge from the literature, that being stated, here is a classical 1936 definition by Redfield [29]: “Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups.” Many studies have been completed on various matters of acculturation such as immigration, business mergers and the like, offering an intense knowledge base from which the prior experience of others can be drawn upon.

While the term psychological acculturation captures the psychological transformation an individual experiences throughout the acculturation process [19], it would be flawed to believe that group-level acculturation phenomena affect all members of the group uniformly or even consistently [3]. After all, groups are comprised of individuals, each of whom are uniquely built and respond to change in their own personal way.

The idea of “interculturalism” was coined mainly by French-language scholars to capture the existence of, “the set of processes by which individuals and groups interact when they identify themselves as culturally distinct.” [13] (Berry et al’s translation). When compared to acculturation, interculturalism seems to be a slightly different shade of grey which can make it difficult to study the effects of one or another in research. A subtle distinction is interculturalism’s tendency to have greater aptitude as a culture generator than does acculturation [3].

According to [3], those who undergo acculturation typically employ one or more acculturation strategies over time; that is, *how* they choose to acculturate is a dynamic, highly organic process [7]. Figure 1 illustrates the combination of the non-dominant group’s coping with what is known as cultural maintenance (i.e. the level of effort placed on maintaining one’s cultural identity), along with the perceived desire to advocate relationships with the dominant/host group. Four acculturation strategies become apparent from the illustration: integration, assimilation, separation and marginalization.

An individual’s acculturation strategy is a unique blend of personal attitude toward each of the four options and the behaviors expressed while bearing those attitudes [5]. A low value perception of one’s cultural identity while embracing the host culture tends to result in assimilation. On the other hand, maintaining personal cultural traits while actively engaging with the host population reflects an integration strategy. If interaction with the host culture

is avoided and native culture qualities are closely guarded, separation will likely result. Marginalization occurs when neither native nor host cultures are perceived to hold value by the non-dominant group and both are rejected.

[3] makes three excellent points as to why particular acculturation strategies may be selected over others. Although an individual may be naturally inclined to choose a particular acculturation strategy, the environment may heavily influence her decision. For example, cultural maintenance may be high under private circumstances (at home, within clubs etc.), while public situations may have a different effect. Personal preference might almost always be trumped by the context within which a person exists, leading someone to choose one strategy over another without much lenience for personal preference. Also, acculturation strategies have been known to vary with age and maturation, leading individuals to switch between strategies to accommodate evolving perspectives. Lastly, it is very important to appreciate the crucial role host groups play in the potential acculturation strategies of the non-dominant group. If the dominant group has very little tolerance for any other acculturation strategy than what they prescribe, the non-dominant group is likely to conform to such practices. According to empirical evidence found in [3], integration provides the best psychological adaptation strategy, suggesting strong correlative properties. Acculturation gaps caused by increased adaptation rates of younger generations compared to older ones have been significantly associated with family conflict and decreased life satisfaction [1].

During the acculturation process of an individual, three main outcomes are likely which are based on levels of circumstantial turbulence [3]. In the least challenging of environments, “behavioral shifts” [6] and “culture learning” [12] are cases where the new culture simply replaces the old native traits. Some minimal unlearning of native habits [3] or “culture shredding” [6] is usually required to break old routines. Then there are times when moderate conflict exists, resulting in “culture shock” [27] or “acculturative stress” [4]. Various coping strategies may help overcome these moderate stressors. In extreme cases where major struggle or conflict remains a larger-than-life obstacle which cannot be mitigated, “psychopathology” or “mental disease” may occur [24] which if left unchecked may lead to clinical depression and incapacitating anxiety [3].

While many acculturation frameworks exist, this paper settles on one that is general in nature yet highly applicable to this qualitative research study.

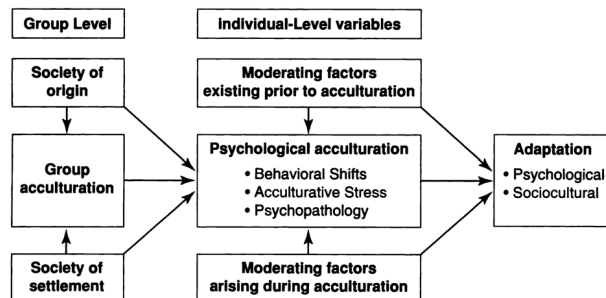


Figure 2 Framework for acculturation research (adapted from [28]).

Figure 2 illustrates much of what was previously discussed, beginning with factors which influence group acculturation strategies on the left which in turn affect the psychological acculturation strategy (of the individual) in the middle section. The rightmost portion of the diagram displays possible changes an individual may undergo during the acculturation process. This framework captures the main variables of psychological acculturation [3] which should be considered for such related studies.

2.2. Force-field analysis of acculturation

This model views acculturation as a dynamic interaction between opposing forces (that is, behavioral influences) of organizational integration and cultural differentiation [15]. The latter is defined as the desire of the non-dominant group to maintain native cultural integrity, while the former is the willingness of the dominant group to integrate “outsiders” into their cultural entity.

The theory of quasi-stationary equilibrium when applied to the acculturation process suggests that behaviors are the result of interaction between opposing behavioral influences (i.e. forces) [23]. Each force exhibits a direction and strength (or degree) of influence. As can be seen in the Figure 3 below, this framework also captures the increase in system tension as the forces of both cultural differentiation and organizational integration increase simultaneously.

Of the four acculturation modes, deculturation offers the least system tension as neither organizational nor native culture is practiced. Assimilation and separation both induce system tension on the lower end of the spectrum, as each of these cases has stability due to opposing forces which complement each other; that is, strong organizational integration along with weak cultural differentiation, and *vice versa*. Acculturative tension exists where there is resistance to change in a

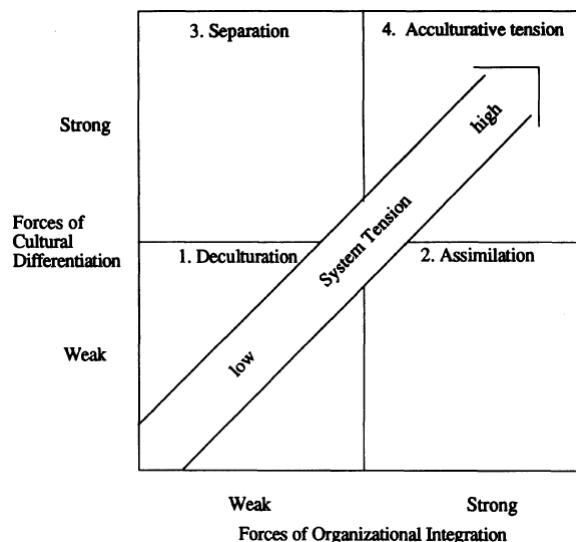


Figure 3 The four archetypal modes of acculturation (adapted from [15]).

circumstance of high organizational integrative forces and is subsequently a high tension system [15].

The modes of acculturation depicted in the theory of quasi-stationary equilibrium should be viewed more as pathways of dynamic forces which balance between cultural differentiation and organizational integration, rather than static outcomes [15]. While balanced states may be achieved during the acculturation process, shifts may occur which would result in different modes of acculturation. This ongoing process of balance, shift, and rebalance eventually leads to a final acculturation mode.

This model will be part of the emerging theory documented later in this research paper.

2.3. Interactive Acculturation Model (IAM)

The IAM is a framework which combines three different components [10]:

1. Acculturation orientations of the non-dominant group within the host community.
2. Acculturation orientations of the host community towards the non-dominant group.
3. The outcomes or product of the acculturation orientations of the host and non-dominant groups toward each other.

The model presents the relations of host and non-dominant groups in a non-determinist, dynamic manner [9].

Host Community: Low-Medium High vitality group	Immigrant Community: low, medium vitality groups				
	Integration	Assimilation	Separation	Anomie	Individualism
Integration	Consensual	Problematic	Conflictual	Problematic	Problematic
Assimilation	Problematic	Consensual	Conflictual	Problematic	Problematic
Segregation	Conflictual	Conflictual	Conflictual	Conflictual	Conflictual
Exclusion	Conflictual	Conflictual	Conflictual	Conflictual	Conflictual
Individualism	Problematic	Problematic	Problematic	Problematic	Consensual

Figure 4 The Interactive Acculturation Model (adapted from [10]).

Figure 4 illustrates that the individual or non-dominant group is expected to adopt one of the five acculturation orientations along the top of the image based on their desire to maintain native cultural integrity [10]. The host community is also assumed to pick one of the five categories on the left of the image which would be driven by the cultural makeup of the host society.

The data for the interactive acculturation model were collected via surveys and questionnaires within both dominant and non-dominant groups. Note that only three *consensual* outcomes are predicted in the model where both groups share either integration, assimilation or individualistic acculturation approaches. *Conflictual* outcomes (worst case scenario) are predicted in most combinations (12 total), while *problematic* outcomes are expected in 10 blocks. [10] reported that reduced acculturation stress was observed when integration policies were enforced as compared to assimilation approaches.

3. Research Method

This qualitative research study undertook the research question of how is acculturation expectation disparity between apprentices and their expert counterparts best reduced.

Though acculturation has been extensively studied, this particular research question presents reasonably underdeveloped territory for which a grounded theory approach would be optimal [34]. Grounded theory was primarily used as guided by [16] “as a general method of comparative analysis” to help fill the gap of the possible outcomes of acculturation expectation disparity specifically between experts and apprentices. Via rigorous research techniques, the data collected provided a foundation for theory generation as expressed by [17].

Two experts and two of their apprentices were individually interviewed for this study and their responses were videotaped and transcribed. They were all specifically selected for their maturity and experience in their respective field. Each expert has many years of extensive experience and is a critical part of their organization. The novices who were interviewed have invested substantial time and resources towards becoming qualified, giving them a rich perspective and solid foundational authority. The interview data underwent first level coding via a combination of in-vivo and descriptive coding techniques, followed by in-depth second level pattern coding methods [31] that allowed sufficient time for emergent themes to wholeheartedly surface from the data.

Continuously modified protocols were designed beforehand and used during each interview as a form of self-correction. Probing and snowballing techniques were used during the interviews which were held in a non-threatening, informal setting with the interviewees [30]. Data collection continued until theoretical saturation was achieved which reproduced identical themes from the interviewee. The data were also parsed for subtle meanings which were clarified with informal follow-up meetings. In addition to the videotaped interviews, personal handwritten notes were also taken as the subject spoke to help capture mental notes as they occurred.

This research not only attempted to understand the possible acculturation expectation disparities that might exist between experts and their apprentice counterparts, but also tried to understand the potential methods for reducing related acculturative stress.

4. Results

After completing a thorough literature review, transcribing recorded interviews, then coding and parsing the data, grounded theory was generated via emerging themes and combined with two distinct acculturation theoretical frameworks to generate a powerful new acculturation theoretical lens.

The data revealed a peculiar phenomenon between the experts and apprentices. The following summation table illustrates a simplified version of the findings:

Table 1 Simplified interview findings.

Experts	Apprentices
Possess explicit/tacit knowledge/experience	Motivated to learn/gain knowledge/experience
Know/share requirements for success	Want/seek requirements for success
Want their apprentices to succeed	Want to succeed

The details of Table 1 give the impression of an optimal breeding ground for accelerated acculturation and reinforced success; this, however, was not the case of the study at hand. Although interview data from the experts and apprentices initially appeared to complement each other, further analysis presented a high tension system with substantial levels of acculturative stress. The data suggest that more than a simple exchange of information is required to stimulate healthy acculturation. As the following sections will explain, a crucial missing factor is the element of experts mentoring their apprentices. The aspect of mentoring which is a critical part of the ADAM emerges from the interview data and is regarded as a reducer of system tension and acculturative stress.

An explanation of the grounded theory generated from emerging interview themes which was combined with the force-field analysis and the Interactive Acculturation Model is also included in the write-up. The in-vivo and pattern codes, followed by emerging themes will be listed for the experts' and apprentices' interviews in the following sections.

4.1. Experts' cases

Table 2 Expert codes and themes.

In-Vivo Codes	Pattern Codes	Emergent Themes
passion is important	Deep level of understanding	Culture shredding
get deeply involved		
have a deep understanding		
go to a deep level		
should have fundamental concepts		
fundamental understanding of the foundation	Important to produce	
doing independent work		
contribute		
generate excellent work		
the goal is contributing		
I expect to see excellent work	Peer approval is a factor of success	Assimilation orientation
success means being able to communicate with peers		
success is excellence		
the program, doesn't work for everyone		
biggest challenge, finding people to help you	System tension exists	

Table 2 presents the in-vivo and pattern codes derived from the experts' interviews from which two emerging themes were generated: 1) Culture shredding and 2) Assimilation orientation.

The central emergent theme rests in the approach of the experts which suggest an unlearning of previous knowledge via culture shredding while replacing that knowledge with professionally vetted insight. There is

also the suggested drive to perform as other experts do in an attempt to ensure assimilation and support a successful transformation. The interview data reveals that there might be disturbance within the department which may be attributed to acculturative stress.

4.2. Apprentices' cases

Table 3 Apprentice codes and themes.

In-Vivo Codes	Pattern Codes	Emergent Themes
still seeking to figure out	Struggling, disoriented	Acculturative tension
I will hopefully hit Nirvana at the top		
figure out where north is		
I am frustrated and remain overwhelmed at the mentoring deficiency		
keep apprentices from wandering off into the wilderness		
I didn't know what I need	Desires tacit knowledge	
mentoring is needed		
help figuring out the path		
there should be more mentoring		
best done as a mentoring process		
it's good to have mentors, at least two people	Frustrated, annoyed, pressured	
interact with the experts		
socialize your ideas with experts and receive feedback		
some think it's a rite of passage to suffer		
not very constructive use of time		
under strict time limits	Has explicit knowledge	
want to see an investment in acculturation		
a breakdown at the organizational level		
master the skill sets required		
be able to do work on own		
build up enough knowledge and expertise	Sharing weaknesses and strengths	
being able to step back and learn how to think		
unlearning things, before you start learning		
mimic what smart guys are doing		
being successful, contact with your peers		
study together, develop ideas together		
sharing weaknesses and strengths, that's important		
socializing is important		

Table 3 has the in-vivo codes, pattern codes and resulting emergent themes which emerge from the interview data of the apprentices. The emergent themes were: 1) acculturative tension and 2) resourceful integration which both feed into the underlying theme of the need for mentors and guidance to help reduce the acculturative tension. The build-up of acculturative stress has spawned a valuable (but highly necessary) resourceful integration of skills and knowledge among the novices. An important take-away would be the factors which would reduce acculturative stress such as mentoring, tacit knowledge exchange, and increased perceptions of organizational concern.

4.3. Theory Building

Figure 5 illustrates a new theoretical framework generated from the combination of themes from the research interviews along with the force-field analysis and the Interactive Acculturation Model described earlier in the study.

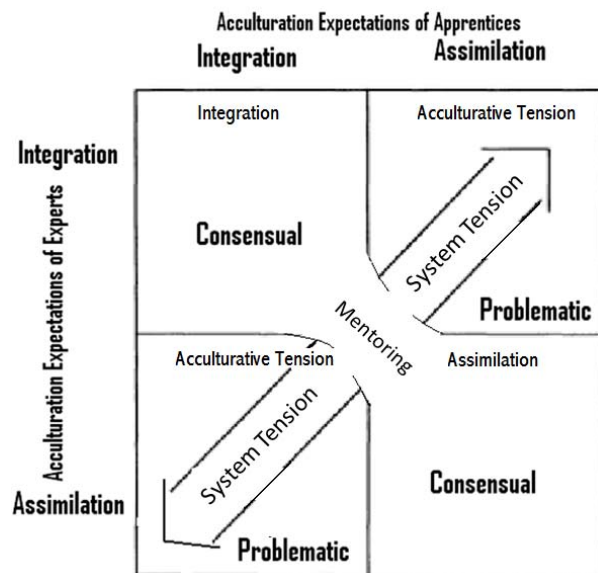


Figure 5 The Acculturation Disparity Analysis Model (ADAM).

The Acculturation Disparity Analysis Model captures optimum facets of two acculturation lenses and combines it with a powerful theoretical framework based on grounded theory. It illustrates the outcome or product of the combined acculturation expectations of experts and their apprentices, noting that when dissimilar acculturation orientations are shared (i.e. high disparity) the result is a higher occurrence of system tension.

The ADAM was considerably influenced by the interview data collected from seasoned experts and their apprentices. The interviews gave a glimpse into the challenging journey of those who pursue expertise, alluding to a high pressure system with steep learning curves, wickets of self-development, and strict time constraints. Experts' responses were steeped heavily in assimilative themes, conveying the importance of "fitting in" like a piece of a large jigsaw puzzle. Having completed the journey themselves, the experts know the requirements to succeed and so they maintain high expectations of their apprentices.

The apprentice interview data display obvious signs of acculturative tension. Exhibitions of novice frustration, disorientation and annoyance perforate the data to a large extent. They also portray a deeply-seated desire to be respected, treated as "equal", and acknowledged by their expert counterparts via mentoring. This integrative methodology to acculturation in an environment where the host is primarily using assimilative techniques, leads to increased system tension which manifested itself by way of frustrated apprentice responses.

The interview data suggests large amounts of acculturation expectation disparity between the experts who seek assimilation and the apprentices who desire integration. The aspect of mentoring which was lifted from the interview data would drastically reduce the system tension in the department under study. As the ADAM illustrates, shifting from a state of relatively high system tension and towards the center of the model requires mentoring between the expert majority and apprentice minority. At the point where system tension is sufficiently reduced, harmonized acculturation strategies would maintain consensual acculturation orientations.

Where there is little acculturation expectation disparity between experts and their apprentices (that is, both share similar acculturation orientations) the acculturation mode remains consensual, regardless of whether it's integration or assimilation. As stated in the literature review, individuals may shift acculturation strategies over time. When experts and their apprentices are in the same acculturation mode this maintains a low acculturation expectation disparity even if acculturation strategies shift as an apprentice matures in professional development. Mentoring further mitigates any acculturative tension and smoothes potential transitions between acculturation orientations, acting as a catalyst for achieving consensual acculturative modes. Higher acculturation expectation disparities where experts and apprentices use different acculturation strategies tend to result in acculturative tension and can be considered problematic.

The ADAM offers itself to be used as a forecasting mechanism which may facilitate the restructuring of organizational policies to reduce acculturation expectation disparity, which in turn would streamline the acculturation process. The model suggests that when experts and their apprentices are using the same acculturation orientation, consensual circumstances are formed. Mentoring is also a critical part of the model as it has the effects of an acculturation catalyst, particularly during transitions between acculturation orientations. The model advocates that different acculturation orientations adopted by experts and their apprentices may lead to problematic acculturation modes and higher degrees of acculturative tension or stress.

Other research suggests that best practices for *enculturation* included mentoring and forming collegial, professional relationships [11]. This supports the mentoring aspect of the qualitative research which naturally surfaced from the data using grounded theory guidelines by [16]. Berry concluded in his 2008 study [8] that integration is more likely to occur than assimilation from intercultural contact, especially when exhibiting high degrees of psychological continuity and incorporating interacting peoples. Such findings support the high degrees of acculturative stress found among the apprentices who desire integration but receive pressure to assimilate.

This model may not fully account for all acculturation processes between accomplices and their expert counterparts. There are surely circumstances in which this model will not be very effective where the need for strong qualitative research is necessary to be performed. Other qualitative researchers are invited to help further expand this already very robust and exciting field of study.

5. Conclusion

Acculturation is the shift in cultural patterns that are caused by the continuous interaction between groups of individuals rooted in different cultures and is a major contributor to an individual's success or failure within an organization. Acculturation also plays an important role in the successful maturation of an apprentice's professional development. While there can be many obstacles that challenge an apprentice who has undertaken the daunting journey of one day becoming an expert in a particular field, an improper acculturation process can be a stumbling block that can adversely affect one's morale and momentum. Force-field analysis of acculturation offers a powerful lens through which to appreciate the vigorous forces which play into an individual's resulting acculturation mode,

while the Interactive Acculturation Model offers a non-deterministic representation of the relations between host and non-dominant groups, and the expected acculturative outcomes that are likely to emerge. Both of these lenses were built around the grounded theory derived from emergent themes of qualitative interview data to generate the Acculturation Disparity Analysis Model (ADAM). The ADAM indicates the conditions under which acculturation may be most advantageous or detrimental to apprentices. As suggested in other enculturation studies, mentoring is a catalyst for acculturation, as is low acculturation expectation disparity. An increased tendency for system tension and acculturative stress occurs where levels of acculturation expectation disparity are higher.

As a starting point for future research and enhancement of the ADAM, researchers might consider a three dimensional approach which integrates a time series, or perhaps explores the consilience of the ADAM and Knowledge Management theory. Though this research is limited, I extend an inviting welcome to others who would consider expanding this acculturative model.

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